

IT'S A WASTE OF TIME TO LOOK FOR ANTICHRIST

October 2, 1996 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

We think it is in vain that certain Bible teachers are looking into today's news events for information about the Antichrist or Armageddon.

The Old Testament prophecies about Israel's conversion and glorious kingdom look ahead to the 70th week of Daniel and the second coming of Christ. This present church period is an interlude. The prophetic clock ticked away through the 69 weeks of Daniel 9, which are actually weeks of years, then stopped at Christ's death. According to Daniel 9:25-26, the Messiah would come, then be "cut off" after the 69th year. That is exactly what happened. The Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, and offered Himself as Israel's Messiah and King. John 1:11 tells us that "he came unto his own, and his own received him not." Christ was rejected by the nation Israel, as prophecy said He would be, and He turned to the Gentiles, to call out a people for His name from among the heathen nations. That is what Christ is doing today.

This is explained in passages such as Luke 19:11-27; Acts 15:13-18, and Romans 11:1-29. His disciples thought He would establish the kingdom immediately, but He explained that this would not be the case. Israel would be put aside; Christ would return to Heaven; and only later would He return to establish the promised kingdom.

During this present interlude in Bible prophecy--the church age, as it is called--Christ is calling out a people for his name from among the heathen nations. At the end of this period, true Christians will be caught away to Heaven, and the prophetic clock will start again and the final week of Daniel 9, a week of seven years, will be fulfilled. This is also called the Great Tribulation, and is spoken of in Scriptures such as Matthew 24 and Revelation.

During the Great Tribulation, also called the time of Jacob's trouble, unconverted Israel and the world will undergo great torments--judgments from Heaven and unspeakably horrible wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and such. The Antichrist will make a peace pact with Israel and will rule the entire world. After three and one-half years the peace pact will be broken and the Antichrist will desecrate Israel's temple and will set himself up as God. That will mark the beginning of the last half of the seven years and the start of the most horrible period of trouble the world has ever seen (Dan. 9:26-27; Matt. 24:15-28). At the end of the 70th week of Daniel, Israel will be converted and Christ will return in power and glory to establish the promised kingdom and to judge the nations (Matt. 24:29-30; 25:31-32; Zech. 12:9-14:21).

The Christian's responsibility is not to look for prophetic signs but to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Christians have an entirely different program from that of the nation Israel. We are never told to look for the fulfillment of Israel's prophecies. Our work is to carry the Gospel to all peoples. That is the great business of the Christian and of the Lord's churches. Christians are to be ready at all times to be caught away from this world (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-58). For the Christian, the coming of Christ is imminent, meaning it is possible at any time, it is always on the verge of happening. Christ warned, "Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. ... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. the Son of man cometh." (Matt. 24:42,44; 25:13). This is very, very important. It is crucial that the Christian be ready to depart at all times, ready to face the Lord Jesus Christ. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. ... For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:4-9).

The Christian can know the season, and can know that things are heading toward the fulfillment of prophecy, but we cannot know the day nor the hour of Christ's return. We will not see the Antichrist make his covenant with Israel. We will not see the Antichrist stand in the temple and announce himself as God. We will not see the great judgments poured out upon this wicked world. We will not see the northern power of Ezekiel 38-39 descend upon Israel and be destroyed by God. We will not see the armies of the world congregate in the middle east to stand against Christ at Armageddon. Those events belong to Daniel's 70th week, which is part of Israel's program. Christians have part in another program, altogether, and we need to mind our business and make sure that the work of the church is fulfilled.

I fear that there is a lot of time wasted by Christians in the study of current events, and in trying to find prophetic fulfillment in these events. Certainly it is wise to know that the hour is late. The fact is that the hour has been late for 2,000 years. We have been living in the last hours for 2,000 years. During this time, God has been longsuffering toward this wicked world, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). God has been calling out a people for His name. That is why the Gospel is continually to be preached throughout the world. This is the means whereby God is saving people and adding them to the churches. It is therefore the worldwide preaching of the Word of God which is to be the priority of every Christian and every assembly.

Anything, brethren, which detracts from the Great Commission is dangerous, even if it is the study of current events in light of Bible prophecy.